

# Express Processing for Small Projects

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A DDES Customer Information Bulletin



King County Department of Development and Environmental Services  
900 Oakesdale Avenue Southwest Renton, Washington 98055-1219

<http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/>

## Frequently Asked Questions

King County DDES has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

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Express processing for small projects is an expedited process for minor field changes and small projects. This bulletin will assist you by outlining the eligibility and requirements for expedited processing of minor field changes and small projects. Express processing is limited in scope to projects that can be reviewed and processed in the field or over the counter. This process is not available for projects that involve change of use or occupancy or that require site reviews, including but not limited to, health, drainage, zoning, sensitive areas, fire flow and access or SEPA issues. Express processing incorporates the following three paths for processing simple projects, as detailed later in this bulletin:

**Minor Field Changes (MFC)**

**Subject to Field Inspection (STFI) Permits**

**Over the Counter (OTC) Permits**

In most cases, STFI and OTC permits will be issued the same day of application, and in most cases Minor Field Changes will be approved or denied within a working day or two.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## Examples of projects that would typically qualify for Express Processing

The following are examples of projects that may qualify for express processing. Each proposal will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by DDES staff to determine eligibility for express processing and to determine which processing path will be used.

| Project Example   | Which Process is Applicable? |      |     |
|---|------------------------------|------|-----|
|   | MFC                          | STFI | OTC |
| <b>Residential Projects</b>   |                              |      |     |
| Minor Foundation Repair/Replacement conforming to King County prescriptive construction requirements and or a design stamped by a structural engineer licensed in the State of Washington.  |                              | X    |     |
| Minor structural alterations such as changing a beam, header size, joist size and spacing, etc.   | X                            |      |     |
| Minor non-structural alterations such as Seatac noise abatement, finishing unfinished habitable space, moving or adding interior non-weight bearing partitions.   |                              |      | X   |
| Residential swimming pools.   |                              |      | X   |
| Installation of new heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment.  |                              | X    |     |
| Single story ground level additions, decks, and accessory structures to existing single family residences. The size of the addition or accessory structure is limited to 750 square feet or less. Applications that require sensitive area or drainage review are not eligible. Health Department preapproval is required if the property is served by septic.  |                              |      | X   |
| <b>Commercial Projects</b>  |                              |      |     |
| Tenant improvements up to 5,000 square feet for offices, 10,000 square feet for retail sales, where there is no change of use. Proposals must conform to the STFI (Subject to Field Inspection) Guidelines for Retail and Office Tenant Improvements. See <b>Additional Information</b> section near the end of this document for information on obtaining these guidelines, and Bulletin No. 5 on tenant improvements. |                              | X    |     |
| Replacement of HVAC equipment in kind (not to exceed 4 tons or 48,000 BTUs).  |                              |      | X   |
| Duct work changes and additions to duct systems on a maximum of two floors for retail and office spaces.  |                              |      | X   |
| Restroom exhaust fans.  |                              | X    |     |
| Wall signs.   |                              |      | X   |
| Minor alterations to commercial or multifamily structures with specific DDES approval.  | X                            |      |     |
| School portables on preapproved master site plans.  |                              |      | X   |

## Frequently Asked Questions

| Project Example   | Which Process is Applicable? |      |     |
|---|------------------------------|------|-----|
|   | MFC                          | STFI | OTC |
| <b>Miscellaneous Projects</b>   |                              |      |     |
| Minor damage repair or replacement. Bulletin 4, regarding this type of project, may be obtained as described in the Additional Information section near the end of this bulletin.   |                              | X    |     |
| Evaluation of buildings proposed to be relocated in unincorporated King County.   |                              | X    |     |
| Rockeries up to 8 feet, designed and constructed in accordance with the King County Rockery Standards on single family residential property -- rockeries cannot be used as retaining structures and must meet zoning setback requirements, rockeries under 4 feet do not require a permit but they must meet all King County guidelines. (King County Rockery Standards are available at the Permit Service Center and Building Inspections Section.) |                              |      | X   |

Minor changes are available for commercial site development work. Information about this process is not available in this bulletin. Please contact the Land Use Inspections section (in the Land Use Services Division of DDES) at (206) 296-6642.

## Express Processing Limitations

Express processing is limited in scope. The following are project criteria that are beyond the scope of express processing and will require a formal permit application submittal in accordance with the information contained in *Bulletin 8, Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits* and *Bulletin 9, Obtaining a Residential Building Permit*.

- Permit applications that require site reviews for health (septic systems, wells, and food service), sensitive areas, drainage, zoning, shoreline, SEPA, fire flow, fire access, etc.
- Work that includes change of use.
- Work that includes change of occupancy.
- Tenant improvements, except for office and retail specifically allowed in the Subject to Field Inspection (STFI) Guidelines for Retail and Office Tenant Improvements.
- Additions to single family/duplex residences other than at ground level.
- Additions to accessory structures in excess of 750 sq. ft.
- Additions to commercial structures.
- Major structural alterations of any kind.
- Retaining walls and foundations exceeding King County prescriptive requirements.
- Rockeries exceeding King County prescriptive requirements.
- Pole buildings and metal buildings.
- Commercial mechanical kitchen exhaust hoods.
- Commercial mechanical work that includes new heating capacity.
- Mechanical work of any kind in hospitals, clinics and laboratories.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I proceed if I am NOT eligible for Express Processing?

In the event that DDES staff determine that your project is outside the scope of express processing, you may proceed by filing a regular permit application with full plans at the DDES Permit Center. Customer Information *Bulletin 8, Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits* and *Bulletin 9, Obtaining a Residential Building Permit* will provide you with the information for making a full permit application. (See **Application Materials** section near the end of this document for information on where to obtain bulletins.)

During the application and review process for a STFI or OTC permit, DDES staff may determine that additional review is required and that a permit cannot be issued over the counter while you wait. (Examples: you are expanding the footprint and your property is in a sensitive area, or Health Department review is required, or your plan is too complex for over the counter plan review.) In this event, the Permit Technician will complete the intake process and route your application to the proper review station(s). Your permit can then be issued when the required reviews are complete.

### Express Processing Paths

There are three express processing paths:

**Minor Field Changes (MFC)**  
**Subject to Field Inspection (STFI) Permits**  
**Over the Counter (OTC) Permits**

The specific details for each path are covered in the following sections of this bulletin. The appropriate path is determined by DDES staff based on the size and level of complexity of the project.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Minor Field Change (MFC)

#### What is a Minor Field Change?

A Minor Field Change is a minor change or revision for construction work under a current permit.

#### What kind of changes are eligible for a Minor Field Change?

- Changes in size, spacing and/or span of wood framed floor or ceiling joists with uniform loading.
- Change in beam or header size and/or span.
- Change in interior room configuration and/or dimensions involving non-bearing walls.

#### What kind of changes are NOT eligible for a Minor Field Change?

- Changes that increase or change the building footprint.
- Changing from trussed roof to stick-built roof, or vice versa.
- Relocation of bearing walls.

#### Examples of Minor Field Changes:

- Replacing 2 x 10 floor joists @ 12" o.c. (on center) with 2 x 12 joists @ 16" o.c. (on center)
- Replacing 6 x 12 D.F. (Douglas Fir) header with 3 1/8" x 9" G.L.B. (glu-lam beam)
- Changing the configuration of the master suite when it does not affect bearing or shear walls
- Adding a powder room when it does not affect bearing or shear walls

#### Are plans required for a Minor Field Change?

The alteration must be adequately described. Typically, this will be done by showing the revised area in the space provided on the Minor Field Change form. Additional or separate legal size (maximum) sheets may be provided. When altering some portion of the construction drawings, the revised areas are required to be "clouded." Alterations may sometimes be described in words on the form.

#### How do I initiate and apply for a Minor Field Change?

A Minor Field Change may be initiated by contacting your Building Inspector or Plans Examiner who will provide you, the applicant, with a Minor Field Change form. The form may also be obtained from the DDES Building Inspections section (BIS) or by calling (206) 296-6630. The applicant must complete and sign the applicant's portion of the Minor Field Change form. The completed form is submitted to the Building Inspector or Plans Examiner. He/she will review the information for completeness, determine if the proposed work is within the scope of a Minor Field Change, and ensure that it conforms to code requirements. The Building Inspector or Plans Examiner will approve or deny the Minor Field Change request and inform the applicant in writing.

If the request is approved, the applicant may proceed with the work identified on the Minor Field Change form. If the request is denied, a reason or comment will be noted on the form. The applicant may contact the Building Inspector or Plans Examiner to discuss alternatives.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Subject to Field Inspection (STFI) Permits

#### What is a Subject to Field Inspection Permit?

A Subject to Field Inspection permit is for a small or limited scope project that is not covered by a current permit. Damage investigations and work that is strictly compliant with codes (prescriptive) may be eligible for a STFI permit. (See *King County Prescriptive Construction Requirements* section further in this bulletin for prescriptive information.) A full plan review is not required for a STFI permit.

#### What kind of projects are eligible for STFI permits?

In order to be eligible for a STFI permit, a project will need to comply with code requirements identified by inspectors in the field. Such code requirement issues would normally be addressed during plan review. STFI permits are limited to work within an existing structure.

#### What kind of projects are NOT eligible for STFI permits?

Projects that show an increase or change in the building footprint are NOT eligible for STFI permits. Projects that require full plan review are NOT eligible for STFI permits.

#### Examples of STFI permits:

- Damage investigation (fire, flood, wind, etc.)
- Damage repair/replacement in kind
- Demolition
- Residential Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Equipment (HVAC)
- Minor residential renovations that meet prescriptive construction requirements
- Rockeries between four and eight feet in height
- Building evaluation for relocation
- Tenant improvements that conform to the STFI guidelines for retail and office tenant improvements

The scope of tenant improvement projects include:

- Retail sales, not exceeding 10,000 sq. ft., in buildings already used or approved for retail use.
- Office space, not exceeding 5,000 sq. ft., in buildings already used or approved for office or retail use.  
Lunchrooms or meeting rooms are not to exceed 750 sq. ft.

Tenant improvements are subject to the following limitations:

Zoning is limited to O (Office), NB (Neighborhood Business), CB (Community Business), RB (Regional Business) and I (Industrial) zones. Permits may not involve new or altered toilet rooms or structural alterations. Improvements with floor level changes within the scope of the permit are ineligible. Tenant uses may not include health care providers or the use, storage, or handling of hazardous materials (retail paint stores, auto service, etc.).

#### Are formal plans required for a STFI permit?

Formal plans may be required for STFI permits. Plans that show the scope of the project and how the project relates to other areas of the building and/or site may be required as determined by DDES staff. Formal plans are required for all STFI tenant improvements.

## Frequently Asked Questions

No formal plans are required for: damage investigation, residential mechanical, and relocation assessment. In the case of demolition, if more than one building is to be demolished, a site plan is needed showing which buildings are to remain and which will be demolished.

### How do I initiate and apply for a STFI permit?

Damage investigation, demolition, relocation assessment, and residential mechanical permits may be applied for on a walk-in basis without an appointment. For other STFI permits, a preapproval form may be required. This form authorizes the applicant to apply for a building permit without submitting formal building plans. For damage repair, tenant improvements, and minor prescriptive renovations, the applicant must contact a Building Inspector at (206) 296-6630, or a Plans Examiner or Permit Technician at (206) 296-6600 to obtain the STFI Preapproval form. (Minor prescriptive information is described further in this bulletin.) If you have questions about whether or not an appointment is needed, you may contact the Permit Center at (206) 296-6600.

If a STFI Preapproval form is required as described above, the applicant must complete and sign the applicant's portion of this form. The applicant must provide plans showing the scope of the project, as required on the form. The form is submitted to the Building Inspector, Plans Examiner, or Permit Technician who will review it to ensure that the information is complete, that it is within the scope of a STFI permit, and that it conforms to code requirements. If the request is approved, the applicant will require an appointment to apply for the STFI permit. The applicant must bring the approved STFI Preapproval form and the information noted in the following paragraph to this application appointment. The applicant may schedule an appointment by calling the Permit Center appointment desk at (206) 296-6797.

### What information must I submit for a STFI permit?

The following application items are required for projects that require STFI Preapproval (as described above):

- Legal description and parcel number.
- Completed Certificate of Applicant Status (if you are the property owner) or a completed Certificate of Transfer of Applicant Status (if you are the applicant and do not own the property).
- Completed Affidavit of Application.
- Photocopy of Washington State Contractor's License or Owner Affidavit (notarized) if the owner is acting as his/her own contractor.
- Two full sets of drawings for tenant improvements (see *Bulletin 5, Tenant Improvements*).
- Health Department preapproval for: septic system and/or well for projects that add to footprint, add new bedrooms or significantly increase the life of the building; food service for uses that prepare and/or serve food.

No STFI Preapproval form is needed for damage investigation, residential mechanical, tenant improvements that meet the guidelines, and relocation assessment. For these, only the first three application items listed above are required. In the case of demolition, if more than one building is to be demolished, in addition to the first three items you must include a site plan showing which buildings are going to remain and which are to be demolished.

See **Additional Information** section further in this bulletin for information on the application items listed above.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Over the Counter (OTC) Permits

#### What is an Over the Counter Permit?

Over the Counter (OTC) permits are for new projects and revisions to current building permits (that are beyond the scope of a Minor Field Change). OTC permits are limited in scope to projects that require processing by only a Permit Technician. Full plan review by a Plans Examiner is also required. OTC permits will not be routed to other review stations. They are limited in size to projects that can be processed and reviewed in less than one hour.

#### What kind of projects are eligible for OTC permits?

Over the Counter (OTC) permits may expand the existing building footprint or create a new footprint up to a maximum of 750 sq. ft. for single family additions and accessory structures. Projects requiring Health Department approval that are submitted with Health Department preapproval are eligible for OTC permit processing. Health Department preapproval information is available at the Permit Center.

#### What kind of projects are NOT eligible for OTC permits?

Projects and revisions that show an expansion of the existing footprint and require separate review for health (septic system, wells, food service), sensitive areas and/or drainage are NOT eligible for an OTC permit.

#### Examples of OTC permits:

- Moderate revisions/structural changes to current building permits
- Wall signs
- Single family residential decks that do not require health, sensitive areas and/or drainage review
- Single story residential additions and accessory structures that do not exceed 750 sq. ft. and do not require health, sensitive areas and/or drainage review
- Swimming pools (fencing/barriers) and hot tubs that do not require health, sensitive areas and/or drainage review

#### Are formal plans required for OTC permits?

Formal plans are required for an OTC permit application. The plans must be drawn in accordance with the information contained in *Bulletin 8, Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits* and *Bulletin 9, Obtaining a Residential Building Permit*. (See **Application Materials** section further in this bulletin for information on where to obtain bulletins.)

#### How do I initiate and apply for an OTC permit?

OTC permit applications are initiated at the Permit Center. The applicant must contact the Permit Center at (206) 296-6797 to make an application appointment. An appointment is required to ensure the processing of your permit.

#### What information must I submit for an OTC permit application?

The following application items are required for an OTC permit:

- Site plan to engineering scale on legal or letter size paper; see *Bulletin 9, Obtaining a Residential Building Permit*, for site plan requirements.
- Two full sets of drawings for residential (three sets for commercial).

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## Frequently Asked Questions

- Legal description and parcel number.
- Completed Certificate of Applicant Status (if you are the property owner) or a completed Certificate of Transfer of Applicant Status (if you are the applicant and do not own the property).
- Completed Affidavit of Application.
- Photocopy of Washington State Contractor's License or Owner Affidavit (notarized) if the owner is acting as his/her own contractor.
- Health Department preapproval for: septic system and/or well for projects that add to footprint, add new bedrooms or significantly increase the life of the building; food service for uses that prepare and/or serve food.

See **Additional Information** section for information on the application items listed above.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Additional Information

#### Health Department Review and Approval

Projects that are served by a septic system and/or a well, that add to the building footprint, add bedrooms, extend the life of the building, or that provide food service, will require Health Department review and approval. Permit applications that require routing to the Health Department for review are not eligible for express processing. However, if the project requires Health Department review and approval and the applicant has preapproved, stamped plans from the Health Department at the time of permit submittal, then the project is eligible for express processing, provided that all other criteria are met. Health Department preapproval information is available at the Permit Center.

#### King County Prescriptive Construction Requirements

Prescriptive construction is construction using specific methods described and allowed by the code. Prescriptive construction is limited to specific defined situations. Structural design and calculations are not required for prescriptive construction. An example of prescriptive construction is the use of an approved table to find a joist size based on allowable span and spacing. Prescriptive construction methods allowed by King County Code include:

- Foundation Table (Table 18-I-E 1997 UBC as adopted)
- Span Tables
- King County Residential Corrections sheets
- King County Residential Energy and Ventilation compliance sheets
- King County Rockery Standards

Structural alterations affecting the support of the roof will not be considered prescriptive when affecting areas where the roof snow load is higher than standard. These areas would include parts of Tiger and Cougar Mountains, and most areas east of Carnation, Issaquah, Maple Valley, Black Diamond and Enumclaw, particularly those areas of higher elevation.

Prescriptive Construction information for King County is available at the DDES Permit Center and Building Inspections section. Also, Subject to Field Inspection Guidelines for tenant improvements are available from the Permit Center and from the Building Inspections section. You may call (206) 296-6600 to request Prescriptive Construction information by mail.

#### Walk-in Assistance Available

Assistance with application requirements and the express process is available on a walk-in basis in the Permit Center of DDES at the 900 Oakesdale Avenue Southwest location. The days and times of availability are: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you have questions about whether your application materials are complete or questions as to which express path you qualify for, you may meet with a Permit Technician to go over the specifics of your submittal. Walk-in customers are served on a first-come, first-served basis from a sign-up sheet located at the front desk in the lobby of the Permit Center. Please use this service prior to your application to verify complete submittal requirements and to ensure that your submittal may be processed in a timely manner.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Other Sections and Agencies

The following are other sections and agencies that may be involved in your project:

#### **King County Fire Marshal's Office**

**Family Daycare Inspections:** The Fire Marshal's Office issues Family Child Day Care Home Inspection Permits that provide for inspections and certifications of daycare facilities with 12 or fewer children in the provider's home. (See *Bulletin 14, Daycare Establishments*, for more information.)

**Fire Systems:** A separate Fire Systems Permit may be required from the Fire Marshal's Office if your express project includes or alters a fire system (fire sprinkler, commercial or multi-family fire alarm, propane tank, etc.).

You may contact the King County Fire Marshal's Office at (206) 296-6675.

#### **Washington State Department of Labor and Industries**

**Electrical Permits:** The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, Electrical Division, issues permits and provides inspections for electrical work in unincorporated King County.

South King County -- Tukwila Office (206) 248-6630

North King County -- Bellevue Office (425) 990-1400

#### **Seattle-King County Department of Public Health**

The Seattle-King County Health Department issues permits and provides inspections for plumbing, gas piping, septic systems, wells, and food service in unincorporated King County.

Seattle Office -- 999 Third Avenue, Suite 700; (206) 296-4722

Eastgate Office -- 14350 SE Eastgate Way; (206) 296-4932

Food Service -- contact Seattle Office

### Application Materials

Customer Information Bulletins, Certificates of Applicant Status forms, Certificate and Transfer of Applicant Status forms, Affidavit of Application forms, Owner's Affidavit forms, and the King County Prescriptive Construction information are available at the DDES Permit Center and at satellite offices. You may call (206) 296-6600 to request information by mail.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Other bulletins and telephone numbers that may be helpful

DDES Customer Information Bulletins are available on the Department's web site at [www.metrokc.gov/ddes/](http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/) or you may call 206-296-6600 to request information by mail.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Bulletin 1   | Building and Development Permit Telephone Numbers |
| Bulletin 3   | Demolition Permits                                |
| Bulletin 4   | Damage Repairs                                    |
| Bulletin 5   | Tenant Improvements                               |
| Bulletin 6   | Working with Contractors                          |
| Bulletin 8   | Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits      |
| Bulletin 9   | Obtaining a Residential Building Permit           |
| Bulletin 12  | The Residential Building Permit Process           |
| Bulletin 12A | Residential Basics Program                        |
| Bulletin 13  | Fire System Permits                               |
| Bulletin 14  | Daycare Establishments                            |
| Bulletin 21  | Sensitive Areas Review                            |
| Bulletin 29  | Drainage Review                                   |
| Bulletin 38  | Flood Insurance and FEMA                          |

|              |                          |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| 206-296-6600 | DDES Information         |
| 206-296-6630 | DDES Inspections Section |



King County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require an accommodation to attend a meeting (two weeks notice) or require this information in Braille, audiocassette, or large print, please call 206-296-6693 or TDD 206-296-7217.